

## CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION

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SACRAMENTO, CA 95814-5512



July 14, 2009

Gary L. Hickey  
Project Manager  
Blythe Energy, LLC  
1152 Greenbrier Drive  
Forsyth, IL 62535

**SUBJECT: BLYTHE ENERGY PROJECT TRANSMISSION LINE MODIFICATIONS  
(99-AFC-8C) APPROVAL OF REQUEST FOR STAFF APPROVED  
PROJECT MODIFICATIONS**

Dear Mr. Hickey:

On June 17, 2009, the California Energy Commission (Energy Commission) received a request for a Staff Approved Project Modifications to the Blythe Energy Project Transmission Line Modifications (BEPTL) project from Blythe Energy, LLC (Blythe Energy). The proposed changes include replacement of up to 34 single-circuit poles already installed during construction with double-circuit-ready poles and changes to the Edison B-EM transmission line which are designed to accommodate the BEPTL crossings: (1) relocation of two H-frame structures, and the replacement in the existing location of two additional H-frame structures; and (2) structural support modification at three additional structures by changing hardware from suspension insulators to dead end insulators accompanied with the addition of guy wires.

**PROJECT HISTORY**

The original Blythe Energy Project (BEP) was licensed by the Energy Commission on March 21, 2001 and started commercial operation in December of 2003. The BEPTL project was certified on October 11, 2006, amending the Energy Commission Decision and modifying the generation facility to develop two new transmission lines and a substation for the existing BEP located in the City of Blythe, Riverside County.

An initial request for staff approved project modifications (SAPM), requesting a minor route realignment and relocated connection for the BEPTL, was approved on July 17, 2007. A second request for SAPM, requesting changes that included the realignment of a number of transmission poles, a change in the location of the easternmost and westernmost laydown yards, and a request to change the approved two-conductor bundle configuration to a three-conductor bundle configuration was approved on September 25, 2008. A third request for SAPM for a change in structure support for 17 structures by adding guy wires to safely support the conductor load; expansion of the Desert Center and Julian Hinds laydown yards; and minor communication system changes in the Southern California Edison system at the Blythe Energy Power Plant, Julian Hinds Substation, and the California Capacitor Station was approved on January 27, 2009.

The Application for Certification was reviewed by Energy Commission staff and Western Area Power Administration (Western), the lead Federal agency. The subsequent major amendment (BEPTL) review was conducted by Energy Commission staff, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and Western. BLM and Western acted as co-lead federal agency participants in the amendment review process and for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance. The two federal agencies, the BLM and Western, had control over portions of the existing BEP transmission system and a portion of the proposed right-of-way for the transmission lines. The Energy Commission and BLM were notified in February 2008 that Western would no longer be a participant in the BEPTL Project. Blythe Energy has made several changes to their proposed transmission line project, including the decision to eliminate an interconnection at Western's Buck Boulevard Substation. With this change, Western no longer has an action to address under NEPA, or any other involvement with the proposed project.

#### **AGENCIES AUTHORITY**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is the lead Federal agency for the purpose of NEPA compliance. The BLM involvement is due to the need for portions of the BEPTL to be constructed on BLM administered public lands. Therefore, the BLM is responsible for reviewing the proposed staff approved project modifications to ensure NEPA compliance. Blythe Energy has secured a right-of-way grant from the BLM allowing construction, use, and maintenance of an electrical transmission facility on BLM lands under terms and conditions specified in the grant.

The Energy Commission is the lead agency for the purpose of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance. The Energy Commission's petition review process includes an evaluation of the consistency of the proposed changes with the Energy Commission's Decision and if the project, as changed, will remain in compliance with applicable laws, ordinances, regulations, and standards (Title 20, Calif. Code of Regulations, section 1769). Energy Commission staff mailed the enclosed "Notice of Receipt of this Request for Staff Approved Project Modifications" to the Energy Commission's post-certification project mailing list on July 24, 2009.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**


In accordance with the provisions of Title 20, California Code of Regulations, section 1769(a), Energy Commission staff, along with the BLM staff, has concluded, based on staff's review of the June 17, 2009 petition, that the proposed changes to the BEPTL would result in no significant impacts to the environment and that the proposed changes meet the criteria of section 1769(a)(2). Therefore, staff, and the BLM, recommends approval of the proposed staff approved project modifications.

If you have any questions, please contact the Energy Commission's Compliance Project Manager, Mary Dyas, at (916) 651-8891 or send e-mail to [mdyas@energy.state.ca.us](mailto:mdyas@energy.state.ca.us).



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JOHN KALISH  
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Enclosure

cc: Jack Caswell, Compliance Program Manager, Energy Commission  
Claude Kirby, Bureau of Land Management